

briarpatch

FIERCELY INDEPENDENT

Organizing in the Neoliberal City



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ABOUT US

Briarpatch publishes six thought-provoking, fire-breathing, riot-inciting issues a year. Fiercely independent and proudly polemical, Briarpatch delves into today's most pressing issues from a radical, grassroots perspective, aiming always to challenge and inspire its readers.

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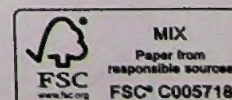
FIERCELY INDEPENDENT

Features

- 4 **A Call to the South from Baffin Island**
Inuit communities oppose oil and gas exploration
BY WARREN BERNAUER
- 8 **The Class Politics of Pipeline Resistance**
Connecting struggles across urban divides
BY UMAIR MUHAMMAD
- 13 **Five Years After the Coup**
Forging solidarity networks in Honduras
BY SANDRA CUFFE
- 16 **The Rise of Philanthrocapitalism**
What passes for progressive city politics today
BY IVAN DRURY
- 22 **Indigenous Farmers of Guatemala's Highlands Confront Canada's Goldcorp**
A Vancouver-based mining giant in the Sierra Madre
BY KJ DAKIN AND TRINA MOYLES
- 28 **An Education in Gentrification**
Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood
BY JUSTIN PANOS
- 33 **Talking about Sex Work**
Organizing vs. criminalizing
BY AMY SAUNDERS

Departments

- 2 LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
- 3 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
- 36 QUOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND
- 40 PARTING SHOTS
"Journalism with Legs"
BY PATRICIA ELLIOT



Our Infrastructure of Dissent

Whenever a job posting goes up at *Briarpatch*, prospective applicants in places like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver have a common concern: do you have to move to southern Saskatchewan for the job? I got the same answer that everyone gets to this question: yes, you do, but it's honestly not such a bad place. And it's true: the land of living skies is far greater than many know.

Stressing the importance of community and history is commonplace on the left, but putting the two together to forge historical communities of struggle – grounded in a place – is an uphill battle in a world of commuters and itinerant students, of contract work and urban sprawl. Successful organizing ultimately comes down to building relationships, and the merits of growing where you were planted, rather than heading to where the perceived action is, shouldn't be discounted.

Briarpatch will never be published from anywhere but Saskatchewan because its infrastructure is rooted in this place, this land, and these people. Its roots – that radical groundwork – is why it still exists at all. The community of activists that has fought to sustain the magazine spans generations, with a legacy that runs from the militancy of the '70s (when the left was a major force) to today, when we often struggle merely to prevent further erosion of past gains. Former editor Clare Powell hasn't been on the payroll since Iron Maiden released their debut album, but every month Clare joins us in the basement to stuff envelopes for our renewal notices. Clare turned 80 this summer and he is just one of many models here, in southern Saskatchewan, of what it means to make a life on the left.

Publications like *Briarpatch* form part of what Alan Sears calls our infrastructure of dissent, which Sears defines as "the range of formal and informal organizations through which we develop our capacities to analyze (mapping the system), communicate (through official and alternative media channels), and take strategic action in real solidarity."

"As ways of life and work change," Sears notes, "the infrastructure of dissent that thrived in one set of conditions can wither." What's more, while activists in the '70s were spurred by the unprecedented mass movements and radical politics of the late '60s, many activists today have no memory of, or connection to, a vibrant political left: a left with audacity, vision, and the

capacity for major advances. Millennials and Gen Xers were born into a world of cutbacks, privatization, and free market ideology, a world in which the left has always been in retreat and disarray.

This might seem a strange context in which to introduce a new layout and design for *Briarpatch*, but here's the connection: the scaffolding that got us to this place has been erected over time by a community rooted in place and committed to a project no matter the odds. The magazine is able to serve as a truly national platform for independent reporting and serious analysis only because local relationships – an infrastructure of care and commitment – hold things together.

One of the most special things to me about *Briarpatch* is its longstanding anti-colonial mandate – a commitment to amplifying and supporting Indigenous struggles that goes back to *Briarpatch*'s earliest days in the '70s when the collective worked closely with *New Breed* magazine. *New Breed* was published by the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan and was an integral piece of the militant, critical infrastructure of the Métis resurgence. The relationships between *Briarpatch* and *New Breed* were rooted in place and built over time.

Part of the lesson in this, at least for me, is that meaningful solidarity is much more than showing up at an event. Solidarity means having capacity and resources to offer to people who are engaged in struggle. Without infrastructure, our solidarity is fleeting and frequently tokenistic or self-serving. But when we have independent, grassroots infrastructure and resources – be it a nationally distributed magazine, an email list, or a cargo van with a full tank of gas – our solidarity is material rather than symbolic.

This issue of the *'patch* is dedicated to everyone who helped get us here, with special thanks to a couple people in particular. First, thanks to former editor/publisher Valerie Zink who did all the initial legwork to get us publishing in colour and to set about the redesign. Second, thanks to Winnipeg-based designer Mike Carroll, whose spirit of enthusiasm, collaboration, and patience was the perfect match for us. We hope readers like the results. ★

ANDREW LOEWEN, EDITOR
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A VERY INTERESTING LIFE

AS I HAVE been connected with *Briarpatch* magazine from when it was a newsletter and have been a subscriber for many years, it is with regret that I write to ask you not to renew my subscription when it expires this year. I find that in my 94th year of life my political-action-and-interest zeal has also expired and I am quite happy to relax and read fiction now.

I have usually paid the full subscription price except for maybe one or two years. I have always lived under the poverty line, and for many years now my only income has been the old age security pension and supplement, which even now is under \$20,000 per year, though I've never really thought I was poor!

Apart from that I've had a very interesting life being very much involved in the CCF, NDP, and the Saskatchewan Waffle. I was the treasurer of the latter and for three to four years helped to

manage the office of the Waffle publication, *Next Year Country*.

I am enclosing a cheque for \$20 which will be my last donation.

I wish you success in the future and hope you will be able to continue publishing *Briarpatch*.

CATHERINE COX
Grenfell, SK

This letter arrived at the office in late July, handwritten on blue stationery. The Manifesto of the Saskatchewan Waffle Movement 1975 is available online and well worth a read. The grassroots socialist news magazine Next Year Country was published in Saskatchewan from 1972 to 1983. To learn more and read archived issues of Next Year Country online, visit: redougie.wix.com/next-year-country#! – Ed.

fourth annual Creative Writing Contest

Briarpatch is now accepting submissions of original, unpublished writing in the categories of poetry and creative non-fiction (memoir, personal essay, literary journalism) that bring to life issues of political, social, and environmental justice.

With **\$750 in cash prizes** and publication in *Briarpatch Magazine* up for grabs, this opportunity is not to be missed! Deadline for entry is December 1, 2014. See briarpatchmagazine.com for full contest details.



John K. Samson
Poetry judge



Candace Savage
Non-fiction judge

ALL-NEW
POETRY
CATEGORY

A Call to the South from Baffin Island

Rising global temperatures are opening a new frontier for oil and gas extraction in the North. Seeking to protect their traditional hunting territories, the community of Clyde River on Baffin Island is fighting to stop the offshore seismic testing that will blast the ocean floor with sound in search of hydrocarbon deposits.

By WARREN BERNAUER

Photos by DAVID KILABUK



Hunters from Pangnirtung, Nunavut hunt a bowhead whale near Kekerten Island, site of American and Scottish whaling stations in the late 19th century. Bowhead whale is one of many species of marine mammals that migrate through the proposed seismic survey area. The Hamlet of Pangnirtung opposed the proposed seismic survey at a meeting with company representatives in 2011.

Jerry Natanine is an Inuk hunter and father and the current mayor of Clyde River, a hamlet of less than 1,000 residents on the northeast shore of Baffin Island, in the Baffin mountain range. The area is host to many coastal fiords where Indigenous hunters have always harvested a variety of sea mammals. When the Clyde River community learned about new plans to conduct seismic surveys in search of hydrocarbon deposits off the coast, Natanine says, "Our first concern [was] the effect on the animals, marine mammals, because that's our way of life."

Since 2011, when a consortium led by Multi-Klient Invest AS (MKI) first put forward the proposal to conduct seismic surveying off the coast, residents of Clyde River have been waging a political battle against the oil and gas industry. The proposal has faced consistent and committed resistance, with petitions opposing the seismic work submitted to the National Energy Board (NEB) by residents of Clyde River in 2011 and Pond Inlet in 2013. The hamlet council and the Hunters and Trappers Association of Clyde River passed joint motions opposing the surveys in 2013 and 2014. In March of 2014, a meeting of all mayors from the Baffin Island region unanimously passed a motion in opposition to the proposed surveys.

Despite this widespread opposition, the proposal by MKI was recently approved by the NEB. The northeastern Canada 2D marine seismic survey would involve ships using air guns to blast bursts of sound into the water to study the geology below the ocean floor. The survey would take place seasonally, over five years, and cover areas in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait. The information collected would then be sold by MKI to oil and gas companies and used to help locate hydrocarbon deposits.

"We heard about seismic testing being done in the western Arctic and people experiencing what they did, and in the

early '80s they did a little seismic testing right near Clyde," says Mayor Natanine over the phone. "And people saw what that did to the seals. And this time around, people know a little bit about it, and they didn't want anything to do with it."

Concerns with the impact of seismic surveys on marine mammals, including seals, whales, and walrus, have been expressed by Indigenous peoples and conservationists worldwide. These animals form the basis of Inuit hunting culture on Baffin Island.

Natanine explains that the community also does not necessarily need the potential employment and contracting opportunities oil and gas development may bring to the region. The massive Mary River iron ore mine, operated by Baffinland, is currently under construction northwest of Clyde River. Once operating at full capacity, the Mary River mine would be the largest industrial project in Canada's North. Baffinland's project will likely exhaust the community's industrial labour force and local business capacity into the foreseeable future.

"In our community meetings ... there was a consensus – and that's my view, too – that Mary River is enough for the

"When Inuit stand up to fight the oil industry, we need people in the South standing up with us to let the world know what is happening here."

time being for all of north Baffin," says Natanine.

When it comes to oil and gas development, he says, "not this time, not right now."

The Inuit of Baffin Island have been subjected to numerous colonial injustices. In the mid-20th century, Inuit experienced residential schooling, the slaughter of sled dogs by the RCMP, the imposition of colonial hunting regulations, and population relocations by the federal government. Later, in the early

Against Extraction

The movement to stop the MKI proposal is the latest in a series of battles Inuit in Nunavut have fought against offshore oil and gas extraction.

1971: Inuit in Coral Harbour successfully lobby the federal government to place a moratorium on offshore oil development near their community.

1978: The government of Canada places a temporary moratorium on oil development in Lancaster Sound in response to Inuit opposition to a proposal to drill an exploratory well.

2010: Inuit on Baffin Island successfully oppose a proposal to conduct seismic surveys in an area that includes Lancaster Sound.

Follow Clyde River's struggle in local media at nunatsiaqonline.ca

1980s, anti-fur activists undermined the Inuit hunting economy by lobbying the United States and European Economic

Community to ban the import of sealskins from Canada. To this day, Inuit struggle against the animal rights lobby to keep markets open for products of Inuit harvesting – most notably seal and polar bear pelts, as well as walrus and narwhal ivory.

For Natanine, MKI's proposed seismic survey and the NEB's review process are the latest in the long line of injustices the Inuit of Baffin Island have suffered.

"We've experienced injustices through the settlers settling and dog slaughter and stuff like that. What these companies



Bottom: Pangnirtung, Nunavut. Purple saxifrage is Nunavut's official flower and can be seen from a distance on the tundra in summer. Top: Clyde River is on the northeast coast of Baffin Island. Pangnirtung is to the east.

River came make their minds up for themselves about the issue.

"I like the fact that there's a process like that, but one main concern is that people want to see [film of the sound blasts] and let us watch that there's no effects," Natanine says. "We're visual people and we react to what we see. If it's going to be the same just empty words, that's what people don't want to see."

Natanine is also concerned that there is no public registry or other public record being kept of the assessment process. "I think there should be a public record of it available to anyone. But the way they're doing it, they're really secretive."

In April, QIA and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) – the representative Inuit organization for all Inuit in Nunavut – wrote a joint letter addressed to the NEB chairman and the minister of AANDC. The letter reiterated the position that the seismic survey should not be approved until the strategic environmental assessment is complete.

On May 26, the NEB responded to the joint letter from QIA and NTI, saying it would release its decision and report once other federal government agencies had approved benefit plans for MKI's seismic survey. The letter made no direct reference to QIA and NTI's appeal to have

want to do with seismic testing and oil extraction, I saw this as an injustice to people, and people not having a voice to fight it. That's why I took it up."

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) – the representative Inuit organization for the Inuit of Baffin Island – responded to the massive public opposition to seismic surveys by calling on the federal government to conduct a strategic environmental assessment into the broader question of opening the region to offshore oil and gas development. QIA has

insisted that MKI's seismic survey not be approved until the broader strategic environmental assessment is complete. In February, the ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) initiated the strategic environmental assessment.

Natanine says he was pleased that a broader environmental assessment is being carried out, but he has some reservations. He wants information on the impacts of seismic surveys to be provided in an accessible format so Inuit in Clyde



Ricky Kilabuk hunts walrus near Cape Mercy at the mouth of Cumberland Sound on Baffin Island.

the process halted until the first stage of a strategic environmental assessment is complete.

On June 10, AANDC Minister Bernard Valcourt responded to QIA and NTI's letter, stating that he sees "neither the need nor the benefit to put seismic exploration on hold while strategic environmental assessment work is underway."

On June 26, the NEB announced its approval of MKI's seismic survey. In a press release, the board boasted that "never before has there been this level

a July 16 letter to the NEB stating they plan to begin work next year.

The Hamlet of Clyde River responded to the NEB decision by starting a petition to send to the House of Commons, calling on the federal government to reverse the decision. At the time of writing, the hamlet was seeking a member of Parliament to table the petition and weighing options for litigation.

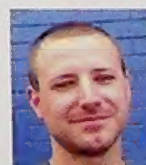
Regardless of what course of action Clyde River ultimately decides upon, Natanine stresses that it is important

for Canadians everywhere to follow Arctic politics and support Inuit when they take a stand

against extractive projects to which they do not consent.

"There are few of us Inuit in this country, under 30,000 Inuit in the territory. We need all the support we can get from other Canadians in the South, especially when

Inuit take action," says Natanine. "When our community first took a stance against seismic testing off our coast, no environmental group engaged with us at all; that's the way they've always been. That has to stop, and we have to work together to fight the destroyers. When Inuit stand up to fight the oil industry, we need people in the South standing up with us to let the world know of what is happening here." ★



WARREN BERNAUER is a PhD candidate at York University whose research addresses the politics of mineral extraction in Nunavut. He has worked

closely with Inuit communities opposing offshore oil and gas development near Baffin Island and mining development in the caribou calving grounds of the Kivalliq region.

DAVID KILABUK is an Inuk photographer from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, where he is also a heating technician and father of nine. See more of his work at David Kilabuk Photography on Facebook.

Inuit still struggle against the animal rights lobby to keep markets open for their traditional harvests.

of public participation in the Board's Environmental Assessment process." The press release neglected to mention that the vast majority of public input was opposed to the proposed surveys. The consortium led by MKI responded with

THE CLASS POLITICS OF PIPELINE RESISTANCE

As anti-pipeline campaigns rise to the forefront of activist activity, do environmentalists need to re-evaluate their engagement with affected communities such as Toronto's Jane-Finch neighbourhood?

By UMAIR MUHAMMAD

Photos by CHRISTOPHER KATSAROV



Summer is a busy time along Toronto's Finch Hydro Corridor recreational trail, with soccer tournaments taking place nearly every weekend. Enbridge's Line 9 pipeline runs directly underneath the hydro towers.

The Jane-Finch community is among the many neighbourhoods in Toronto that Enbridge's Line 9 runs through. Standing at the geographical margins of the city, Jane-Finch is a low-income, racialized community that faces many challenges, including chronic unemployment and underemployment, targeted policing, and substandard housing. Not surprisingly, the community is routinely stereotyped and vilified. It also happens to be a hotbed of activism.

Line 9 currently carries conventional oil from Montreal to southern Ontario but is slated to transport bulkier Alberta tarsands oil and less stable Bakken crude oil in the opposite direction. The proposal to reverse the flow of the 38-year-old pipeline has been the subject of significant activism across Ontario. The fact

that Enbridge's proposal was approved by the National Energy Board without there being an environmental assessment has also generated concern. Errol Young of Jane-Finch Action Against Poverty says: "The Line 9 reversal adds to the environmental concerns faced by the community, including tank farms [oil depots] that create air pollution and result in a constant movement of giant trucks carrying gasoline on our roads." The prospect of a spill is highly distressing as the pipeline passes close to homes, shopping malls, schools, health centres, and a subway line under construction.

The potential environmental harm connected to the pipeline is not limited to the local perspective, however. The climate crisis, which is fuelled by projects like the Line 9 reversal, also concerns Jane-Finch residents. And climate

change, now experienced in the form of increasingly powerful storms, droughts, and floods around

the planet, can feel very close to home. Extreme weather events like last year's devastating Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines routinely strike countries to which residents of Jane-Finch have intimate ties.

ACTIVIST CULTURE IS OFTEN ALIENATING FOR THE AVERAGE PERSON.



A girl walks along the Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational Trail. Every day hundreds of people traverse and use the area above the Line 9 pipeline

Despite the concerns about the pipeline that exist in Jane-Finch, it's been tough to build links between the community and the anti-Line 9 work being done elsewhere in Toronto. It has been challenging, for instance, to convince community activists to attend meetings and events about Line 9 that take place outside of Jane-Finch. This is in part because Jane-Finch activists are busy organizing around multiple issues – including ever-impending cuts to the social safety net – that have immediate impact. To a significant extent, however, the difficulty in building links arises from differing terms of engagement with environmental issues.

LIFESTYLE POLITICS

Much environmentalism today is individualistic and lifestyle oriented, typified by choices to commute by bicycle or buy organic groceries. Jane-Finch activists, on the other hand, are more likely to see the negative impacts of environmental harm as part of the package of social marginalization to which their community is subject.

Lifestyle changes cannot be reasonably demanded of underprivileged people with more than enough to worry about already. Moreover, the focus on individual lifestyles shifts attention away from the structural roots of the problems, environmental or otherwise, that confront us. It also doesn't help when environmentalists appropriate Indigenous and eastern spiritual traditions, which can seem disrespectful and does little to address the material problems faced by marginalized communities.

This isn't to suggest that the particular activists leading the fight against Line 9 in Toronto spend most of their time stressing bicycle commuting and purchasing habits while chanting Buddhist hymns. Far from it. They highlight Enbridge's terrible environmental record, point to the disturbing ties between the fossil fuel industry and the state, and lament the environmental impacts of continued fossil fuel use. They also insist on the

need for an energy transition that would include the creation of green jobs so that not only the environment but also common people benefit from policy changes. While such discussion of a green transi-

present. He eventually got into a heated exchange with someone about the need to love seeds. It is not clear what is gained by such pleas and debates, but much is lost, including the interest of activists

RATHER THAN HAPHAZARDLY TRYING TO ADOPT THE SPIRITUALISM OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WE SHOULD LEARN HOW TO ADOPT THEIR SPIRIT OF STRUGGLE.

tion tends to treat the core problem as an absence of political will and fails to explore the deeper structural reasons why such a transition isn't forthcoming, it is an important attempt to outline how the needs of everyday people can be reconciled with the needs of the environment.

In fact, the Toronto campaign has demonstrated an admirable commitment to connecting pipeline resistance to the broader realm of social and environmental justice. John Riddell, a long-time activist and a member of East End Against Line 9, isn't wrong when he says that "the 'No Line 9' milieu is strong in grappling with tarsands, fracking, climate change as a whole, and Indigenous rights."

The direction being taken by those leading the anti-Line 9 campaign notwithstanding, the air surrounding the campaign is choked by more run-of-the-mill environmentalism. At a recent downtown event closely related to the campaign, a discussion on climate change was interrupted by someone who wanted to tell us about the need for everyone to grow their own food. I had persuaded a few Jane-Finch activists to make the long trip to attend the event and was embarrassed when the food grower continued on and on with his plea, gaining the support of many of the environmentalists who were

who are organizing around issues that matter most to underprivileged urban communities. The Jane-Finch activists who attended the event were not terribly impressed. One said to me afterwards, "I don't want to go to more things like this."

Those taking up the cause of the environment have traditionally had trouble getting on the good side of working-class people and racialized communities. The cause has suffered tremendously because of it. The challenges of building links between Jane-Finch activists and the wider anti-Line 9 campaign should be seen as an opportunity to tackle the matter. Issue-based activism of the kind many of us are involved in does not always produce opportunities for discussing underlying ideas and approaches to activism. Now that we have such an opportunity, we should take it.

"Activist culture is often alienating for the average person," says Connor Allaby of Jane-Finch Action Against Poverty. "If we want to build a broader movement, it will help to resonate with common people." In the case of environmentalists, if they want to be taken seriously by marginalized communities, they need to become aware of their own individualism. We need to change the structures of our social system, not our light bulbs. Growing one's own food, or even



A resident walks past signs indicating Enbridge's 38-year-old Line 9 pipeline. The pipeline currently carries conventional oil from Montreal to southern Ontario but is slated to be reversed to transport tarsands bitumen and Bakken crude oil from the west to the east.

growing food collectively, is not on its own a means by which injustice can be confronted. Too often, only those with a relative amount of privilege can become involved in projects of this kind, and they can end up retreating from reality into a local utopia, which is no way to push for progressive social change. As the American political theorist Jodi Dean has said, "Goldman Sachs doesn't care if you raise chickens."

BETTER LINKS

Looking at the historical record, from the civil rights movement to labour reforms, we can ask whether meaningful social change is created by relatively privileged minorities who attempt to create isolated utopias or whether it arises from the activities of the oppressed who work together to overcome their oppression. Surely the latter is most important. We need to recognize our common sources of oppression, understand their structural

underpinnings, and work to overcome them.

A further word must also be said about the role of spirituality among environmentalists. There is an irony here within the environmental justice movement. White progressives who call themselves environmentalists have a troubling tendency to indulge in mysticism (through yoga, meditation, communicating with the world of plants, etc.) while losing sight of the social struggle. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples the world over have, with their spiritual traditions intact, taken up a leading role in the struggle for social change. Rather than haphazardly trying to adopt their spiritualism, we should learn how to adopt their spirit of struggle. Efforts to create a coherent radical politics require a commitment to rationality, and falling into a patchwork of mysticisms is no way to establish that.

As vital as the Line 9 struggle is today, it likely won't remain an issue for activists

to organize around that far into the future. While working to ensure that the pipeline reversal is stopped, we also need to think about how we can improve our effectiveness by removing the obstacles to linking distant and disparate groups. The environmental justice movement will not reach its potential if it continues to alienate some of the most marginalized and most politically radical sections of the population. ★



UMAIR MUHAMMAD is the author of *Confronting Injustice: Social Activism in the Age of Individualism*. He is a member of Jane-Finch Action Against

Poverty and has recently been active in the campaign against Enbridge's Line 9 pipeline.

CHRISTOPHER KATSAROV is a Toronto-based documentary photographer whose work focuses on labour and the extractive industry.



Conversation, 2009, 10" x 9", Silkscreen.

Five Years After the Coup

Five years after the 2009 Honduran *coup d'état*, journalists, writers, and political dissidents are organizing solidarity networks in the face of continued threats and attacks.

By SANDRA CUFFE

Art by ERIK RUIN

Ceferina Sánchez García stands in front of the doorway to her kitchen. Inside, a kitten sleeps curled in a ball at the edge of the earthen stove, where the last of the tortillas are cooking over the fire. It has just stopped raining, and the lush, forested mountains surrounding the community of La Tejera seem especially green.

This is exactly where the 73-year-old grandmother stood when the police came looking for her son in November 2013, seven months into an ongoing Indigenous Lenca blockade against the construction of a hydroelectric dam in western Honduras. Tomás García, an outspoken blockade participant like her son, had previously been shot and killed by a soldier. Others have been attacked this year.

Sánchez García grabs a large wooden stick and holds it diagonally against her slight frame. "They aimed their guns at me from over there," she says, indicating a spot 20 feet away. Unable to find her son, the police insulted Sánchez García's grandson, kicked him several times, and left. "I wasn't afraid," she says. "We're against the dam, for the land."

Criminalization of, attacks against, and murders of Indigenous land defenders, LGBTQ organizers, journalists, human rights activists, and political opponents have become the norm in Honduras, and many have fled for

their lives. Militarization, violence, and repression have risen dramatically since the June 28, 2009, *coup d'état*. To cope with increasing threats and attacks, human rights defenders and media workers have been developing networks and alert systems.

Bertha Oliva takes a moment to find the words to describe her alarm at the unfolding reality. She sees an increasing resurgence of the policies and death squad activities of the '80s, and it's not a comparison she makes lightly. In 1981, her husband was abducted from their home by six men, presumably from the state death squad, Battalion 3-16. He was never heard from again. Oliva co-founded the Committee of Relatives of

Honduras holds the notorious distinction of having the highest per capita homicide rate in the world. It also ranks as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. LGBTQ organizations have documented more than 100 murders of transgender, lesbian, and gay Hondurans since the 2009 coup. In the same time frame, more than 100 farmworker movement activists and land occupation participants have been killed in the lower Aguan valley region alone. Indigenous land defenders and community leaders struggling against natural resource extraction and energy projects have also been targeted.

Canada, the U.S., and international financial institutions are pouring mil-

I didn't think we were going to live through this again because we had continuously worked so that we wouldn't have to.

the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras and is currently the organization's general coordinator.

"Since 2009, one can see how the situation in the country has suffered a profound setback in terms of the protection of human rights," says Oliva. "I didn't think we were going to live through this again because we had continuously worked so that we wouldn't have to."

lions into security programming in the region, in part to bolster the investigative capacity of police forces and the judicial system, but only an estimated one per cent of crimes are ever investigated in Honduras. *Journalism in the Shadow of Impunity*, a 2014 report by the international human rights program at the University of Toronto's faculty of law, PEN Canada, and PEN International,

points to the historical legacy of impunity as a principal determinant of today's abuses and lack of investigation.

"The roots of the crisis lie further back in Honduras' history, notably in its failure during the demilitarization process that began in the 1980s to hold those who had

Faced with the state's practical intransigence, media workers and human rights defenders have been developing networks and other strategies. The Committee for Free Expression has been building the RAPCOS project, a web of local networks around the country. The initiative brings

its existence and getting more people and organizations on board. "Our goal isn't to replicate the work being done by other organizations but to organize different actions," Meza says, explaining that cultural and artistic freedom of expression isn't something addressed by existing organizations in the country. The provisional board has developed a three-year work plan, but the next hurdle will be approval of PEN Honduras as a national branch at the 80th PEN International Congress being held in Kyrgyzstan from September 29 to October 2. "We're making progress," she says.

Like journalists, human rights organizations are working to link human rights defenders around the country. "Human rights have always been an issue debated in the big cities like Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula," says Oliva. But defenders in rural and Indigenous communities fighting land grabs, mining, and energy projects – like Sánchez García and her son in La Tejera – are increasingly at risk, she says. "We see the need to empower and make visible those who are struggling on the ground."

For now, hard times are here to stay in Honduras, says Oliva, and things will probably get worse before they get better. But she remains hopeful that the road to justice and a return to democracy can be constructed from below, one step at a time.

"If we wait for the state or the government to solve the problems of inequality, social injustice, and human rights violations, we're not going to see it happen, even in the long term," she says. "It's the people who have to organize themselves, to rise up." ★



SANDRA CUFFE is a freelance journalist reporting on Indigenous, environmental, and human rights issues in Canada and Central America.

ERIK RUIN is a printmaker, shadow puppeteer, and founding member of the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

Laws aren't what is needed in Honduras. If there's no political will to respect human rights in practice, laws don't matter.

committed serious human rights violations accountable for their actions," wrote the report's authors. The conclusion is echoed by Oliva, whose words grace the cover of the report: "When we allow impunity for human rights violations, we see the crimes of the past translated into the crimes of the future."

Despite this record of impunity, an initiative to protect today's human rights defenders and journalists is moving forward. In June, the Law on Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Operators of Justice was passed by the Honduran Congress. The law was initially a joint project of three national human rights organizations, but work on the proposed legislation was cut short by the coup in 2009. When a government agency picked up the initiative after the coup, the Committee of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras declined to participate. The situation has changed, says Oliva, and a human rights law isn't going to repair a broken democracy or spark a return to rule of law.

"Laws aren't what are needed in Honduras. I don't think the answer is more laws because at the same time this law to protect human rights is approved, other laws that restrict rights and violate human rights are being passed," says Oliva. "If there's no political will to respect human rights in practice, the most amazing laws can be created but the results will still be against those of us who defend human rights, against those of us who defend life."

together journalists, local organizations, and others to develop capacity for an immediate response and alert system if a media worker is threatened or attacked.

Dina Meza is an independent journalist who knows all too well what it's like to be targeted. She has been threatened and followed due to her work reporting on human rights issues. Phone calls and text messages have included threats of sexual violence and allusions to the disappearance of her teenage daughter. Meza spent several months abroad for the safety of herself and her family.

These days, Meza is organizing PEN Honduras as a national branch of PEN International, a worldwide writers' organization dedicated to freedom of expression and to speaking out on behalf of writers who are threatened, jailed, or killed for their views. The initiative was inspired in large part by the 2014 *Journalism in the Shadow of Impunity* report, which concluded that journalists in Honduras needed to organize themselves in the face of continued threats.

"It seemed like a really interesting initiative," says Meza, who was interviewed for the report and is now the president of the provisional board of directors for the proposed PEN Honduras. The initiative is bringing together writers, journalists, artists, human rights defenders, lawyers, and others working for freedom of expression in the realms of art and culture as well as literature and journalism.

For now, the incipient organization is focused on spreading awareness about



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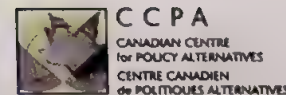
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THE RISE OF PHILANTHROCAPITALISM

Why have even our most celebrated cities become increasingly stratified places, where farmers' markets and new bike lanes exist amid escalating inequality and skyrocketing housing costs? Starting with the demise of social democracy, veteran Vancouver community organizer Ivan Drury charts the emergence of what passes for progressive politics today – philanthrocapitalism – and offers a radical framework for renewing urban social struggles in the neoliberal era.



Assemblage, 2014. Ink and acrylic on wood panel.

By IVAN DRURY
 Paintings by JON SHAW

Late last winter at Vancouver's Maritime Labour Centre, city councillor Geoff Meggs spoke at the launch of a regional union-backed social justice organization called the Metro Vancouver Alliance. Meggs is a long-time anchor of the British Columbia labour movement. In the 1980s, he was the editor of the fishers' union newspaper and the personal editor for the legendary Canadian communist Ben Swankey. In the '90s, he was a high-level adviser in the B.C. NDP government. And in the 2000s, he migrated, with many of his contemporaries, into civic politics where he helped build Vision Vancouver, the labour-supported party that has held city hall for two terms and appears set to take a third this November.

But from his city council seat as a founding member of Vancouver's third way party, Meggs has helped lead Vancouver to some unflattering distinctions: it has the second most expensive real estate market in the world, the highest homelessness numbers in its own history, and the highest child poverty rate and greatest income equality gap in Canada. Meggs, an architect of inequality, was celebrated at the inauguration of a social justice organization in the very city he has helped to stratify. How did this all happen?

THE THEORY OF HEGEMONY

Vision Vancouver's brand of progressive politics might appear a local issue, but the concept of hegemony helps us understand Vision's relevance for urban neoliberalism more broadly. The Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci drafted his influential concept of hegemony within the walls of Mussolini's fascist prisons. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci defined hegemonic power as the combination of force and consent within a "historic bloc" of classes and social groups that dominate economic, social, and cultural life. Key to hegemonic power is the formation of the "common sense" of the day: the embedded beliefs and assumptions that people accept as natural, like that tax cuts fuel economic growth, that gentrification is inevitable, that economic growth is healthy, or that locally produced food is more ethical.

In contrast to Gramsci's theory of hegemony, many leftists today explain the power of neoliberal governance with a conspiracy theory that goes something like this: workers support neoliberal governments because of their corrupt labour leaders, and government policy is dictated by big corporations

who pull the strings of corrupt political parties with lavish campaign donations. Like most conspiracy theories, this is a tempting notion because it presents us with a simple image of a puppet master at the top, controlling the hapless masses. We like this idea because it forgives us our mass complicity in nets of injustice and simplifies the project of change. And, like most conspiracy theories, it also protects us from the uncomfortable truth: urban neoliberal politics have a vast social base.

Vision Vancouver emerged as the progressive wings of the ruling and middle classes seized political and economic leadership from the conservative social bloc that initiated the neoliberal revolution in B.C. I call the historic bloc that Vision represents *philanthrocapitalist* because, to their supporters,

Many leftists today explain the power of neoliberal governance with a conspiracy theory.

Vision represents a friendly alternative to the ugliest aspects of capitalism. Taking moral cues (but not policy) from social democracy, philanthrocapitalism aims to replace taxation and state-driven redistributions of wealth with voluntary acts of charity and "innovative" micro-market projects. To sell their charity as social change, philanthrocapitalist leadership draws on potent cultural symbols associated with social justice and sustainability, obscuring structures of inequality and exploitation. In Vancouver, these cultural symbols draw from the vocabularies of environment, labour, and Indigenous struggles. Bike lanes are only the beginning. This past June, Vision formally acknowledged that the city rests on the unceded territories of Coast Salish Indigenous nations. Such gestures are lauded as progressive, and are borrowed from the platform of COPE, the civic party to Vision's left, but they do not redistribute wealth, return stolen lands to Coast Salish nations, or intervene in capitalist accumulation in the city.

With the demise of social democracy – and its commitment to full employment, progressive taxation, and expanded social services – philanthrocapitalism became hegemonic in Vancouver by establishing a historic bloc made up of urban capitalists, urban labour unions, and the progressive middle

class, presenting a moderate program billed as progressive while isolating more radical voices that could expose the illusions of a socially conscious capitalism.

SOCIAL BASES OF NEOLIBERALISM

In the mid-1980s, conservative parties began the restructuring of the B.C. economy, and particularly the economy in Vancouver, away from industry and toward finance and real estate development. By the time the B.C. Liberals took power on an austerity and anti-union agenda in 2002, the services employment sector had increased from less than 40 per cent of the Lower Mainland workforce in 1981 to 78 per cent in 2012, with the great majority of the work concentrated in Vancouver. This economic shift dove-

tailed with the Liberals' union busting and cuts to social programs as well as with the potent free market discourse that grew to occupy every corner of official politics.

In the lead up to the 2005 civic election, amid the defeats of labour, the retreat of social democracy, and the shrinking imagination for alternatives to the free market, Vancouver's then sole labour-backed party, COPE, split in two, with the right wing of COPE forming a new party: Vision Vancouver. Under a program of perpetual economic growth through perpetual real estate development (and the transformation of Vancouver into a resort city), Vision sought to crystallize in itself a new historic bloc, combining the fractured and short-term interests of sections of labour with the financial and investment interests of urban capital.

READING CAMPAIGN DONATIONS

It is so often repeated that it may be the tag line of Vancouver: *developers own city hall*. And if it is with campaign donations that urban capitalists have bought city hall, then it is only logical that campaign finance reforms would divest them of the city. But, what if we think of campaign donations not as buy offs but as expressions of the economic power that animates political parties? A party's campaign coffers are the political expression of a social bloc composed of different groups. With this view, election campaign donor lists might tell us which social, cultural, and ideological forces crystallize in a political party and also who is excluded from its hegemonic bloc. The problem is not located at the point of transaction between the party and its base but in the political and economic reality they orchestrate. The popular lefty Vancouver slogan, "Developers Out of City Hall," points in the right direction but doesn't account for an urban economy that rests heavily on real estate and the service jobs finance capital supports. It also tends to present city hall as the boss

of the urban economy rather than the managerial branch. The solution, then, must go deeper than campaign finance reform. It must develop a politics based on human need rather than the constant growth demands of capital, and that means taking on the business class as a whole and not just its politicians.

Over three election seasons, Vision took in \$1.1 million from its top 10 corporate donors, most of whom were real estate corporations and luxury goods marketers. Half of the

B.C. Liberals' top 10 2012 campaign donors were also top donors to Vision, including key real estate giants like Wall Financial, Redekop Construction, and real estate marketer Bob Rennie, who plays media huckster and fundraiser for both Vision and the B.C. Liberals. These corporate donors are not pro-labour. Under the name Five

Philanthrocapitalists direct reformist efforts away from hard economic frameworks like wages and rent toward spaces where super-rich donors can make their mark without disturbing profits.

Boys Investment, Lululemon yoga capitalist Dennis "Chip" Wilson contributed \$50,000 to the B.C. Liberals in 2012 and \$50,000 to Vision in 2011. According to Forbes, Wilson is the 16th richest person in Canada with a net worth of US\$1.8 billion. He is also a public Ayn Randian who produced a tote bag with the slogan "Who is John Galt?" referencing Rand's super-capitalist literary manifesto *Atlas Shrugged*. David Aisenstat, a monopoly restaurateur and CEO of the Keg steakhouse chain, gave \$100,000 to Vision in the 2011 election before red-baiting the NDP in the 2012 provincial election.

The single biggest donor to Vision Vancouver, however, is not a McCarthyist captain of industry. It is an ideologically driven group of wealthy social reformers: our philanthrocapitalists. No single person within the philanthrocapitalist group donated as much as the corporations, but they are a narrow ideological group, closely rallied around a common project, whose collective contributions are immense. A group of at least 49 individual donor groups affiliated with philanthrocapitalism donated more than \$400,000 to Vision in just the 2008 and 2011 elections. The main players in this group are Joel Solomon and Carol Newell and their related groups: Tides Canada, Renewal Partners, Strategic Communications, and Hollyhock. These groups support large environmental organizations, fund social justice projects like the Pivot Legal Society, and are proud advocates of social change. So why are they cozied up to a party with right-wing libertarians? What is their role in Vancouver neoliberalism?

PROGRESSIVE INEQUALITY

In a 2012 YouTube video from a San Francisco conference, Marian Moore, co-founder of a group called Play BIG, which rallies super-rich philanthropic donors, introduces a panel



No Left Turns, 2013. Ink and acrylic on wood panel

with Renewal Partners executives, Solomon and Kristin Hull. "I know that people want to align their money with their values," says Moore. "Play BIG is about peers helping peers. It's about subverting the dominant paradigm about money, and it's about the liberation of money and the liberation of people." She says she is a "steward of tens of millions of dollars" but that she was never interested in philanthropy until Play BIG showed her how large donations have meaning. "We're at a time between times," she says, "and we need pioneers." The crowd applauds.

Solomon, a co-founder of Renewal Partners, is happy to be the pioneer that millionaires need. "We are here talking

as pioneers who want to encourage others to take the risks they can take so that things can be invented and tested and experimented with, and that bigger, smarter players may come in and commoditize it effectively. And that would be success." His mission is to create a sustainable economy from the city of Vancouver outward. His project is no less ambitious than reforming capitalism itself. "We need both radical action to demonstrate what can be, and incremental change, reformist change of capitalism, so it's kinder and gentler and thinks about the long-term future and thinks about everyone instead of just the individual."

UPPING THE ANTI



A tool in the struggle

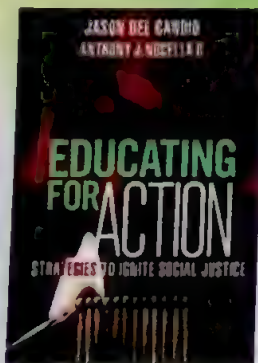
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The role of philanthrocapitalists in the neoliberal social bloc differs from both the corporate group and from labour. Philanthrocapitalism is the ideological glue, the discursive sparkle of social change that holds the social bloc together. When it comes to city politics, philanthrocapitalists direct reformist efforts away from hard economic frameworks like wages and rent toward voluntary spaces of social intercourse where super-rich donors can make their mark without disturbing profits. Philanthrocapitalist innovations like bike lanes, green spaces, private arts funding, and the striking of dramatic poses on environmental policy mobilize progressive cultural symbols to buffer the harsh realities of growing inequality. The positive language of change sweeps along Vancouver's powerful middle class as well as those workers who imagine themselves as part of the middle class and identify with its tastes and values.

The historic bloc expressed through Vision Vancouver does not, however, include all the powerful, which is why it can sometimes appear progressive or as a lesser evil to more right-wing parties. To the south, the U.S. political theorist Adolph Reed Jr. has explained that the Democrats and the Republicans are both neoliberal parties but that the former embraces diversity while the latter opposes it. The pro-diversity neoliberalism of philanthrocapitalism excludes the more conservative, industrial, and resource extraction-based sections of the capitalist

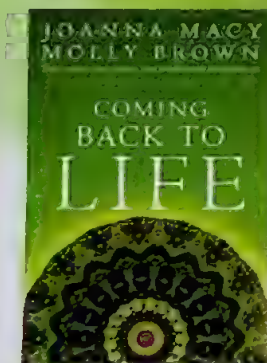
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class who refuse to co-operate within philanthrocapitalism's marginal limits and don't share its aesthetic or cultural values.

When it comes to inequality, there is an ideological double duty at work in social policy like Vision's homeless shelters or pro-gentrification "social mix" policies: first, the blame for systemic crises rooted in capitalism, colonial dispossession, white supremacy, and patriarchal violence is shifted onto the suffering individuals; then, these fields of individual suffering are set out to be managed by the free market in partnership with benevolent philanthropists and NGOs. In the name of care, philanthrocapitalism promises to institutionalize disenfranchised, low-income groups in highly regulated structures. Such policy does not, as Solomon claimed in his San Francisco address, make capitalism "kinder and gentler." The philanthrocapitalist model of social change appears to work in Vancouver only because the new elite has inherited the fruit of the economic shift – pioneered by conservative neoliberals – toward real estate, finance, and investment capital. With the industrial working class pushed aside, the new elite is developing a resort city free of urban blight.

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Despite their high pretensions, urban neoliberals are still part of the ugly capitalism they find distasteful. Vancouver is, according to *Business in Vancouver* magazine, "a world centre for mining exploration" with more than 1,200 exploration companies headquartered alongside its bike lanes and view corridors. Provincial politicians don't have the luxury of such civic greenwashing. In the winter of 2014, Brian Topp, the B.C. NDP's chief strategist, reflected on the NDP's catastrophic 2013 election loss and blamed it squarely on their decision to campaign against the Kinder Morgan pipeline, saying, "We all take our collective responsibility for bad decisions." Within the limited framework of neoliberal economics and politics, the NDP failed to develop a political and economic alternative to thousands of jobs for their rural working-class base. Vision's social bloc is insulated from such dilemmas by the super-profits reaped from Vancouver's Pacific Rim power position in the global economy, by the service sector and short-term construction jobs these super-profits support, and because the profits from resource extraction in the rest of B.C. flow into corporate offices and the bloated wallets of CEOs, not in Terrace and Kitimat, but in Vision's Vancouver.

Urban radicals might take a lesson from the failures of the B.C. NDP who rejected a pipeline but offered no alternative to its economic "common sense." What, after all, is our alternative to the perpetual real estate development, gentrification,

and resource extraction of neoliberalism? If the death of social democracy opens up space for more radical alternatives, then to realize them we need a new historic bloc capable of forming its own common sense, its own common vision of practicable economies, social relations, and individual and collective health. Such a bloc would have to establish its basis not only among the most vulnerable and oppressed, nor only at the left

fringes of organized labour or student life, but in a broad assemblage of social groups which are excluded from the neoliberal city. In forming a counter-hegemonic bloc, we must begin from where we find ourselves: with a working class that includes those women, migrants, volunteers, non-capitalist producers, and unwaged

workers who produce our social wealth. And we must begin by taking on a living legacy of colonialism that will not be corrected by official acknowledgement or recognition but instead by reparations, sovereignty, and autonomy for Indigenous nations rising.

Just because Vision's brand of progressivism operates in the realm of ideology does not mean we should give up on popular ideas and attitudes as a terrain for political struggle. Gramsci argues that, in a historic bloc, "a popular conviction often has the same energy as a material force." We might engage this terrain first by understanding neoliberal power as a system rather than as a conspiracy and then developing our structural critique and therefore our structural vision for change. From this critique, we will be better able to unite different communities by seeing how their distinct oppressions connect (like, for example, how rural displacement due to resource development mirrors urban gentrification). The goal of this counter-hegemonic bloc would not be to maintain its alternative vision at the margins of society but instead to help create a common image of a world beyond capitalism itself – and to assemble the organizational structures to help us get there. ★



IVAN DRURY is a writer, organizer, and aspiring historian who has lived on unceded Coast Salish territories in Vancouver all his life. He currently organizes with the Social Housing Alliance and is on the editorial collective of the *Downtown East* newspaper.

JON SHAW moved to Vancouver to paint and explore after completing his BFA at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. His work often features the city's less appreciated, yet often traversed, environments, combining drawing and painting techniques with references to print and advertising.

Indigenous Farmers of Guatemala's Highlands Confront Canada's Goldcorp



Wheat stalks wave in the hot air of the Sierra Madre in northwestern Guatemala. Farmers from dozens of villages seed the landscape surrounding the municipality of Comitancillo in the department of San Marcos. One such village, Tuixcaychis, is a few kilometres up a dirt road from this viewpoint and just 25 km from the controversial Marlin Mine. Home to 1,500 people, Tuixcaychis is perched at an elevation of 2,650 metres, capping the ridge of the arid mountain



After enduring decades of genocidal civil war, perhaps the greatest threat to the Maya-Mam people of northwestern Guatemala today comes from multinational corporations such as the Vancouver-based mining company, Goldcorp.

By KJ DAKIN and TRINA MOYLES

Photos by KJ DAKIN

Lines etch across Tomasa Perez Jimenez's tawny features as her eyes study her floor. The cracked earth contrasts with the party pink of her traditional blouse. Her voice is quiet and steady as she discusses the mine that has been operating on her doorstep for more than a decade.

"In truth, [the mine] has brought a lot of conflict here; it's brought very many social and environmental conflicts," says the 54-year-old subsistence farmer.

Jimenez is a Maya-Mam from Tuixcajchis, a village of 1,500 people in the municipality of Comitancillo, which ascends to an elevation of 2,650 metres in the department of San Marcos in northwestern Guatemala.

The Maya-Mam farmers of northwestern Guatemala are descendants of the Maya civilization that flourished from 2000 BC to AD 900. For 2,000 years they have been planting and harvesting indigenous maize, beans, and squash on small plots of land scattered along the sides of the arid Sierra Madre de Chiapas mountains.

Violent colonization and occupation of their land, labour, and resources are nothing new to the Maya-Mam – they have endured it for nearly half a millennium. During successive conquests

of Spanish conquistadores and then German landowners, invaders seized the most fertile lands for plantations and forced the men to cut coffee and build roads.

From the 1960s to the 1990s, the Guatemalan government, which has

Goldcorp enjoys access to the local water supply for its operations without paying utilities for the privilege.

never in more than a century of existence had an Indigenous leader, violently targeted the Maya-Mam and other Indigenous ethnic groups in northwestern Guatemala with acts of genocide. A scorched earth counter-insurgency policy was enacted in the early 1980s, in which villages were razed, women were raped, and men were burned alive inside churches. The four-decade assault on Indigenous peoples during the civil war claimed 200,000 lives.

Today, the international resource extraction industry is the primary force appropriating the ancestral lands of Maya-Mam farmers. Goldcorp is a Vancouver-based corporation that ranks as one of the largest mining companies in the world and has, according to the local population, illegally extracted over 1 million ounces of gold from the Marlin Mine using open-pit technology.

In 2005, Maya-Mam farmers were informed by corporate and government officials that the land in San Marcos had been sold to a company for producing orchids, says Francisco Mauricio, a 40-year-old agricultural technician working with the Maya-Mam Association for Research and Development (AMMID). AMMID is a local organization that supports farmers and women's groups to build household and community capacity.

"After the land was sold, people began to watch the arrival of heavy-duty machinery. Machine after machine [came], and suddenly the people said, 'What's going on here? What kind of orchids are they producing with this machinery?'" says Mauricio.

"People never knew it was going to be a mine. They were tricked; they were fooled," he says. "The mine has deceived many people here in order to develop." The Guatemala Human Rights Commission has published other testimonies that corroborate Mauricio's claims.

The development of the Marlin Mine is backed by major internal and external stakeholders, including the World Bank's International Finance Corporation, which lent US\$45 million in start-up capital to Glamis Gold, the Canadian-registered company that launched the project before selling the contract to Goldcorp in late 2005.

There was an immediate move to action by the Maya-Mam and other Indigenous groups, such as the Sipakapense, in 2004 when they began to organize and protest against the mine. The national government, in response, deployed military forces to quell the people's resistance. Equipped with riot gear, water cannons, rubber bullets, and guns, state forces were sent to chase away crowds of farmers and community members while protecting the company's site and equipment. Undeterred, the Maya-Mam organized consultations and referendums to discuss the benefits and consequences of the mining activity in their communities and to vote on the issue.

"All of the communities [in San Marcos] have said no to the mine, but the government doesn't recognize the consultations as binding," says Mauricio.

Maya-Mam communities and organizations have sought international support, appealing to human rights groups and arguing that the government and Goldcorp have broken International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which ensures Indigenous peoples' rights



to free and informed consent to land use.

Rights Action, a Canadian advocacy organization, and the Pastoral Commission for Peace and Ecology have documented cases of poor health and of environmental degradation, including high levels of cyanide, arsenic, aluminum, and nitrates – chemicals used in the open-pit extraction technology – in the rivers and waterways of communities living downstream from the Marlin Mine.



Two women from the village of Tuixcaychis return from a weekly gathering of the community's women, who are growing a nursery of saplings in an effort to improve their land's soil. A new awareness of the importance of trees in retaining water in the soil has taken root in the dry mountain-top community.

In August 2012, via the Peoples' International Health Tribunal, the community reported cases of skin irritations and respiratory infections among infants and children living in communities surrounding the mine, leaving farmers to wonder if there's a connection between contaminated groundwater and waterways and the illnesses.

Farmers also fear that acid rain, produced by evaporation of contaminated water into the atmosphere, is the cause

of decreased fruit tree and crop yields.

"The mine uses water to wash [minerals] that they remove from the mountain," explains Victoria Aguilón, a 50-year-old farmer from the nearby village of Taltimiche. "The contaminated water goes into the rivers and eventually the sea, and it comes back when it rains, destroying the leaves. Maybe it's why the trees don't give fruit anymore. It's damaging everything. That's what the people are saying."

While Aguilón and many others can't be certain the mine is at fault for the current crisis, they say that having a mine in their communities or not should be their choice.

In a dry climate, Aguilón and other farmers are also protesting the depletion of essential groundwater resources by gold mining operations, which can consume up to 250,000 litres of water per hour. Goldcorp enjoys access to the local water supply for its operations without paying state utilities for the privilege.

In 2010, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ordered the Guatemalan government and Goldcorp to provide the affected communities with sufficient, safe drinking water, but both institutions deny the mines have any negative impact on health or the environment and have ignored the commission's order. Instead, despite 10 years of local and international protest and resistance, Goldcorp continues to explore underground mineral veins that feed into the Marlin Mine's reserves.

Goldcorp is also expanding its operations to the Chocoyos site, which rests on top of the Delmy vein that runs from the Marlin Mine and holds vast reserves of silver. The Chocoyos site is 10 kilometres from the home of Jimenez and her neighbours in Tuixcajchis. They fear for their land and their livelihoods, anticipating knocks on their wooden doors and adobe walls by mining officials who will pressure them to sell their property.

"If one day the company comes to my home, my garden, I won't sell my land," says Maria Valentina, a 54-year-old widow from Tuixcajchis. "I won't sell because I need to survive. If I sell, where am I going to live?"

AMMID is discouraging farmers from selling their land. "The company pays well for the land," explains Erwin Orozco, an agricultural technician with AMMID, "but the problem is that if a farmer sells their five hectares of land that they have here and they move elsewhere (closer to town) in the municipality to buy land, the money isn't enough. They will only get, maybe, half a hectare of land, which isn't enough to live off."

Goldcorp says it is dedicated to development and that it sends officials to consult with community leaders about development projects, including the construction of roads, health clinics, and schools. The Fundación Sierra Madre, a non-profit organization financed by Goldcorp, reports to have funded over 100 social and health infrastructure projects. In a 2010 report, Goldcorp wrote, "[We are] confident that the Marlin Mine



Hauling a pail of water in her village of El Jicaro is the daughter of Osbely Ramirez. Ramirez is part of the Maya-Mam Association for Research and Development (AMMID). The local organization supports farmers and women's groups by teaching them about new farming techniques and educating them about their rights as Maya-Mam people and as women. Residents of El Jicaro have seen the water in the town's river drop dramatically over the past decade. Some blame the warming climate, while others fear that the nearby Marlin Mine's use of massive volumes of fresh water is the cause.

has had a positive impact on social and economic development."

Whether the benefits outweigh the harm is a matter of major contention between the Maya-Mam, Guatemalans, and foreign investors, but there is no question some communities reject the presence of Goldcorp and other mining firms.

"Even though the communities are saying no," says Orozco, "the company officials make a strong impact to [try to] convince people to allow the mine into their community."

For many farmers in Tuixcajchis, including Aguilón, the short-term benefits of health clinics and roads do not outweigh the long-term negative impact of environmental degradation, particularly the contamination and consumption of water resources.

"We are saying, leave our territory because it doesn't belong to them," exclaims Aguilón. "God created it for the Maya people. They have their own land, their own houses [in Canada], so they should leave us in peace. That's what we want here."

But what Aguilón doesn't realize is that Goldcorp's relation to the Maya-Mam and other Indigenous groups in northwestern Guatemala simply mirrors

how the Canadian extractive industry operates on Canadian soils, appropriating Indigenous lands, buying off leaders, and destroying traditional ways of life while poisoning communities. The future of the Maya-Mam's traditional lands in Guatemala remains uncertain. Two Canadian groups, Rights Action and the Council of Canadians, are urging Canadians to write letters to Goldcorp and the Canadian government to demand that the company remove itself from the Marlin Mine and Chocoyos sites in San Marcos. ★



TRINA MOYLES is a freelance writer and photographer originally from Peace River, Alberta and currently based in southwestern Uganda. She

writes about the collision of culture, community development, health, and sustainable agriculture.

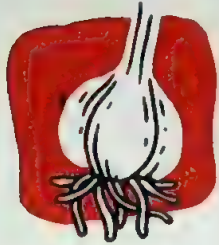


KJ DAKIN is a Vancouver-based photojournalist and writer who can be found hitchhiking on the highway, tree planting in the mountains, or sipping rum and whisky in smoky watering holes from Nicaragua to Sarajevo.

GROW YOUR OWN GARLIC!

in the fall, before the ground freezes...

By Caitlin Taguibao



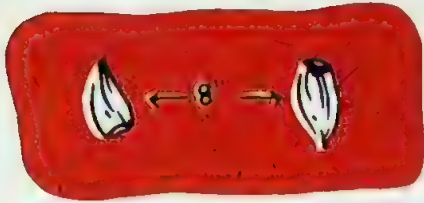
1. Choose your variety of ORGANIC garlic.



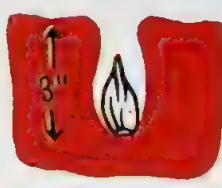
2. Break apart the cloves - discard loose skins, but keep as much on as you can.



3. Each clove may be a different shape and size. Now we are ready for **PLANTING!**



4. Place each clove on the soil, on the intended spot of planting. Give about 8" of space in between each clove. (Tighter spacing will produce smaller bulbs.)



5. Plant each clove about 3" deep with the pointed end up.



6. Cover the cloves back up with soil



7. Cover with a layer of mulch, about 3-4". (Suitable toppings include: straw, hay, grass clippings, dry leaves.)



8. Wish your garlic babies a **GOOD WINTER'S SLEEP!** and that you'll see them in the Springtime!
DON'T FORGET! make a sign to indicate where you planted your garlic



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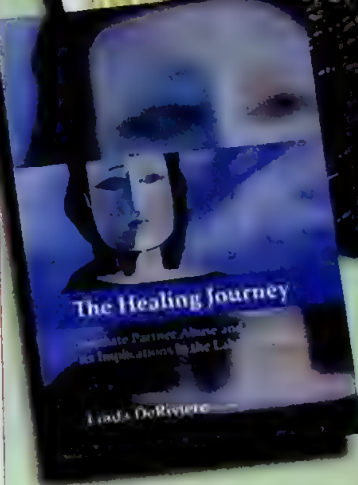


10/ MINIMUM SECURITY
by Stephanie McMillan

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AN EDUCATION IN GENTRIFICATION

Cuts to public services, rising housing costs, the corporatization of education, and police repression do not affect all people equally. Racialized communities like Toronto's Regent Park bear the brunt of the neoliberal transformation of our cities.

By JUSTIN PANOS

Photos by CHRISTOPHER KATSORAV LUNA



Youth from northern Regent Park get together informally about once a week to talk about ways to improve the community. One participant named Kenneth (not shown) says the increase in police raids is an opportunity for the community's youth to organize and talk about what is needed in their neighbourhood.



A resident maintains a community garden for herself and her immediate neighbours in the Pe ham Park Gardens housing project. She says she doesn't always feel safe while gardening.

In late May, a Grade 7 student at Nelson Mandela Park Public School in Toronto was suspended for throwing a water balloon at another student. The suspension occurred in the same week his mother was apprehended in a pre-dawn raid on their community housing building, the last building slated to be razed and rebuilt as part of the so-called revitalization of the Regent Park public housing project. The student's father is disabled, following a horrific act of "street justice." Due to the raids, this student's mother missed her Toronto Community Housing tribunal, which was to decide whether she will be permanently evicted from their long-time home. The tribunal was postponed until this month (September) when the student will find out where he will live as he enters eighth grade.

“APARTHEID-LIKE SPACES”

Nelson Mandela Park Public School sits at the southern edge of Regent Park, Canada's first housing project

and a historically black community in Toronto's downtown core, just east of the large Eaton's Centre shopping mall. Regent Park is a working-class community composed of a series of drab, rundown row houses, maisonettes, and high-rise apartment complexes. A mere mention of Regent Park, especially to white Torontonians, can cause eyes to widen with alarm. Today the community sits in the shadow of hypercommercial spaces like Yonge-Dundas Square, the mall, and new luxury housing projects that are part of the upmarket condo boom that ensnarls the city with cranes, soaring property prices, and traffic gridlock.

Since 2005, the City of Toronto, the police, and the Toronto District School Board have made dubious attempts to improve the living and learning conditions of the residents of Regent Park and similar neighbourhoods. Projects of slum clearance have been obscured by a range of programs with deceiving names such as Model Schools for Inner Cities and the Toronto Anti-Violence

Intervention Strategy, a program that has given Toronto police carte blanche to stop black youth, who are three times more likely to be stopped by police than non-black youth according to the Toronto police accountability bulletin from May 2014. These programs have ushered more police into the schools and more battering rams through the doors of homes. Meanwhile, according to figures released by the school board for 2011-2012, black students accounted for 37 per cent of suspensions in grades 7 through 8 despite making up only 15 per cent of middle school students, while 31 per cent of all high school suspensions targeted black students, who made up less than 12 per cent of the high school student body. The dropout rate for black students in Toronto is a staggering 22.8 per cent.

A current teacher and long-term volunteer in Regent Park (who wishes to remain anonymous) says that Ontario's Ministry of Education and the school board are virtually overrun by psychologists who labour under the notion that

"black youth need reform." Data from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner reveals that the Ontario Association of Psychological Associates lobbies the Ministry of Education heavily. Instead of broad measures to alleviate poverty, these psychological associates are thick within the system, subjecting low-income and racialized students to intelligence and behaviour tests that some teachers say are humiliating. The tests are designed to persuade children and their families that behavioural issues stem from biomedical conditions rather than from social barriers to development. In effect, the tests attempt to medicalize racialized poverty.

A teacher who works in the Home School Program at an area school says that the problems are "endemic to Regent Park" and that "kids are simply hungry or anxious because they don't have nice clothes." In the absence of an anti-poverty strategy, Identification, Placement and Review Committees label students according to subjective "exceptionalities" such as "mild intellectual disability" and assign them to the Home School Program, which places students in a class with extra "educational support" for half the day. Ajamu Nangwaya, an activist and PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, says that isolating these students in "apartheid-type learning spaces" obscures how "high degrees of stigmatization impact how they relate." These placement decisions end up on the students' official Ontario student record and are tantamount to character assassination, says the teacher who works within the program.

UNIVERSITIES FAILING YOUTH

Moving up the educational ladder, the barriers for racialized, low-income students become more daunting. The University of Toronto appears intent on scaling down its 46-year-old transitional year programme (TYP). Housed for four decades in a three-storey Victorian house on St. George Street, in the heart of the campus, the TYP has been highly successful at preparing students who didn't finish high

school for university life. Despite public protests and opposition from organizations, including the Students' Union and the TYP Preservation Alliance, the TYP's old home will soon be bulldozed to clear space for the new Centre for Engineering Innovation and Entrepreneurship, with the TYP shunted into the basement of Woodsworth College. Its faculty have

in the northern part of this corridor, are among the lowest in Ontario. Violence against women has become an urgent issue on campus, but instead of community organizing and rational planning to combat gendered violence, many undergraduates invite police repression on Jane-Finch residents. Little concern is given to over-policing of the kind that



Kids play in the park on a hot summer night in downtown Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood

endured a decade of precarious sessional contracts while the university's governing council has repeatedly moved to reduce the TYP's autonomy and demoralize its staff. A current TYP student, Ryan Rainville, notes that University of Toronto asset management lost \$1.5 billion in the financial crisis of 2008 (erasing nearly 30 per cent of the school's pension and endowment funds in one year), yet administrative salaries continue to rise as the TYP is marginalized.

At York, Toronto's second largest university (and the third largest in Canada), administrative staff and many undergraduates have been overcome by fear of black criminality stemming from the university's location in the notorious Jane-Finch neighbourhood inside the west-end poverty corridor of North York. After-tax median income in Jane-Finch, as well as in many census tracts

killed 18-year-old Junior Manon after he ran from a traffic stop near campus in 2010. A jury ruled that the death was accidental and caused by "restraint asphyxia" after Manon was held down by police. Witnesses, however, reported a police beating.

THE CONDO SQUEEZE

Back downtown, the Regent Park revitalization has been a disaster for most residents and a gold mine for The Daniels Corporation, a real estate developer with many employees who now own condos in Regent Park, joining progressive city councillor Pam McConnell who bought a new Regent Park condo in 2010. A six-week study in 2012 by the *Toronto Sun* showed that of 709 households relocated for phases one and two of the neighbourhood's revitalization, only 187 returned. Those who returned moved into buildings

built by charities, not by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation or The Daniels Corporation, who had pushed the revitalization project.

As smaller and smaller plots of land require ever-greater fortunes to own or rent, security becomes more important to protect the haves from the have-nots. In 2001, Regent Park had a poverty rate of 72.8 per cent according to a United Way study, and over 30 per cent of the residents were under 19. As black youth are more and more isolated and blocked from the labour market, drug commerce becomes a rational economic activity, often accompanied by fierce horizontal violence. In the late 2000s, police officers were planted in many middle schools located in what are euphemistically called priority neighbourhoods. Special resource officers (SROs) were installed in 30 schools, and the program was expanded in 46 other schools.

Nangwaya says the SROs are only in "working-class, racialized schools" in order to "spy on youth and know who to target," as well as to cultivate informants. Nangwaya proposes community-driven education on non-violence as an alternative to the SROs. "Conflicts in schools," he says, "become criminal justice issues and maintain the schools-to-prisons pipeline." An official evaluation of the SRO program in 2009 revealed that it had no impact on student perception of the police or their willingness to report on classmates.

The schools-to-prisons pipeline has numerous injection stations across the city. Pelham Park is a west-end community housing project routinely on police radar. The neighbourhood has experienced a string of school closures that include the West Toronto Collegiate Institute, Brother Edmund Rice Catholic Secondary School, and, most controversially, Carleton Village, where 11 Division of the Toronto Police Services now stands, teachers replaced by squad cars (and television crews, when the police drama *Rookie Blue* is filming). David Chin, a life-long area resident and York student who

has volunteered extensively in Pelham and Regent Park, says, "schools are closing [and] jails and police stations are opening as stagnating wages widen the disparity between racialized youth and average Canadians."

Since the Youth Criminal Justice Act of 2003, the overall incarceration rate for young males has dropped in Canada, but

The Regent Park revitalization has been a disaster for most residents and a gold mine for condo developers.

the proportion of young black inmates has spiked: it's now four times higher than for the overall young male population. In the same period, the overall black prison population has shot up by 80 per cent. Such figures reveal the flip side of a city where condo developers raze neighbourhoods to build luxury towers, and where university land is coveted for programs that benefit private industry while programs like the TYP that benefit marginalized young people are shoved aside. In Toronto, full throttle neoliberalism has now penetrated every aspect of the educational experience for black working-class youth. ★



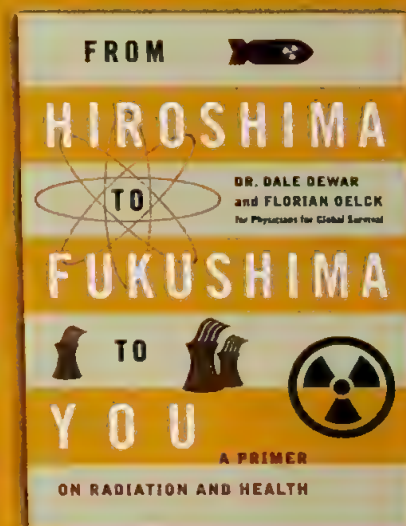
JUSTIN PANOS is a writer from Toronto and a graduate student at York University. He helped coordinate the "Justice 4 Alwy" (al-Nadhir) annual basketball tournament in the past and has lectured on police brutality at the University of Toronto.

CHRISTOPHER KATSAROV LUNA is a Toronto-based documentary photographer whose work focuses on labour and the extractive industry.

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Talking about Sex Work

With the Conservative government set to pass new legislation affecting sex workers, a former sex worker says labour organizing, not criminalization, is what the industry needs.

By AMY SAUNDERS

Illustration by AMBER KIMMERLY

I got into sex work to avoid the trappings of capitalism and how it affects people like a barista making \$10 an hour," says Jeff Kingsley,* a seasoned sex worker living in Toronto.

Sex work is understood in mainstream media and politics to be a conversation about sex, sexuality, bodies, and a woman's freedom and safety. Another position argues that sex work encompasses a conversation *between* sex and economics, currency and bodies. In any case, sex work is not limited to a woman's trade – nor is it limited to experiences of force and coercion.

Kingsley suggests that he has been partially able to achieve his goal of retrieving some power through sex work, but in ways he had not expected.

"I am able to move through [economic] classes more quickly and easily than others. That said, I have to participate in capitalist and middle-class presentations of image and self to be able to engage in the type of sex work with [the] type of clients that allow me to move forward in my goals in higher education and in life," says Kingsley. "It has given me the ability to achieve a middle-class identity more so than most people would think and perhaps even against my political leaning. That said, I am a white male and able-bodied, so I am quite a privileged sex worker."

Under the current economic system, sex work in Canada is a profoundly contentious issue, with some calling for full decriminalization of sex work and many others condemning the act of selling sex altogether. Neither position provides any real answers to the lived reality of sex workers in Canada.

**Name has been changed to protect his identity.*

QUEER CLASS STRUGGLE

Kingsley suggests that non-profits that advocate for the rights of sex workers would ideally operate as unions that fight for

the labour rights of those in the field. Sex workers already have a history of involvement in labour unions, proving that sex workers' rights are the same fundamental rights all workers seek: safe working conditions and protection under the law. Trish Salah, a contributor to the recent book *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, says sex work entered the union movement in Canada in the 1990s when she and others worked with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3903 to bring labour rights to transgender unionists.

The struggle took off at CUPE's 2001 national convention where trans unionists fought for resolution 189, which sought to address the labour violations and violence that trans sex workers

Politicians speak within a paradigm that imagines sex workers to be people who operate outside of our society.

faced. The resolution (which passed) called for CUPE to stand with trans unionists and sex workers for the decriminalization of sex work in Canada. In the long battle for legal reform, this resolution carried with it tremendous weight for the actualization of both sex worker and trans rights.

Salah argues that unions have a duty to recognize the flexibility sex workers need in adapting to a variety of work sites and models of operation. She notes that much of the practical debate over whether sex workers can be unionized or not stems from their ever-shifting and changing workplaces that in turn create ever-shifting and changing needs. From escort

services to internet-based work to the street-based trade, there is no uniform solution for the needs of sex workers. Instead, a framework of rights must be created that addresses the needs of a diverse community.

Emma Catherine is a New York-based member of a sex worker advocacy group called the Red Umbrella Project and a community organizer with Black and Pink, an LGBTQ prison abolition group. In June, Catherine took to Twitter to address the class dimensions of the sex workers' rights movement. "Nothing says class war in [the] sex workers rights movement like the silence about the recent kink.com protests and arrests," she wrote. Catherine was referring to protest actions by the queer group Gay Shame that targeted the popular pornography website kink.com for hosting a themed party that seemed to celebrate the prison industrial complex and its brutalization of trans and gender-queer people. The protesters were allegedly beaten by private security before being arrested. In this conflict, we see the gap between queer identity and the privileges that some groups have within the sex trade.

AN ISLAND, OUTSIDE OF PUBLIC VIEW

Last year, Toronto city councillor Giorgio Mammoliti suggested moving sex clubs and brothels to the Toronto Islands, creating a type of red-light district.

"What this suggests is that these things are obviously going on but they shouldn't be going on in our communities," says Kingsley. "Mammoliti made this suggestion so as to physically separate an already marginalized community, so to speak, to a physically removed and alienated place outside of public view."

While Mammoliti's plan wasn't taken seriously, Kingsley says it shows how politicians speak within a paradigm that "imagines sex workers to be people who operate outside of our society."

It is within that paradigm that Justice Minister Peter MacKay and the Conservative government have put forward Bill C-36 which aims to criminalize johns and the act of purchasing and negotiating sex work. "Politicians frame sex workers as 'others' ... without considering the fact that these people are members of our communities," says Kingsley.

Peter MacKay proposed Bill C-36 based on the argument that not only are sex workers in Canada mainly victims of sex trafficking but that the exchange of sex for cash, goods, or services is an inherently victimizing act that must not occur in public spaces. Such a proposition forces sex work back into the dark corners and alleys, leaving little light or space for sex workers to negotiate their own conditions of safety.

This summer, Toronto hosted the 2014 World Pride celebration. As a former sex worker and queer woman, it was strange to witness the public celebration of gay and queer identity – in highly commodified forms – while the fate of my brothers and sisters in the sex trade hung in the balance as committee hearings on Bill C-36 continued on Parliament Hill. There

Full title: The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act

Sponsor: Conservative Justice Minister Peter MacKay

Bill C-36 would criminalize the purchase of sex and prohibit communication for the purpose of prostitution and the advertising of sexual services to others.

The bill responds to a Supreme Court of Canada ruling in December that struck down Canada's existing prostitution laws as unconstitutional, saying they violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court found that existing laws threatened sex workers' rights to life, liberty, and security of person. Critics of Bill C-36 say it does the same thing and, further, that it would make organizing among sex workers themselves more difficult.

Under the legislation, the punishment for purchasing sexual services would range from cash fines to jail time.

The group of sex workers' advocates whose challenge led to the December supreme court decision has promised to fight the new legislation. Many sex workers oppose the bill as do both the Liberal and NDP opposition parties.

were bright lights on the commodification and economics of sexuality, with official Pride sponsorship by TD Bank and the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, while the livelihoods and rights of sex workers were subjected to the dark whims of Tory politicians.

Kingsley suggests that the difference between MacKay's Bill C-36 and Mammoliti's suggestion of a red-light district on the Toronto Islands is that one denies the existence and needs of sex workers and the other simply tries to relocate them outside of the city and outside of class dimensions – and it seems like the conversation on sex work in Canada ends there. While sex workers' rights activists fight for lawful recognition and their right to organize as workers, politicians seek to usurp the right to determine the conditions of our own sexual practices. ★



AMY SAUNDERS is a Toronto-based feminist writer. She holds an honours bachelor degree in sexuality studies with a specialization in women's studies from York University. She has written for *Up & Coming* magazine, *IN MY BED Magazine*, and *SheDoesTheCity*. She is also the communications director at Flurmag.com.

AMBER KIMMERLY is a freelance artist based in Toronto. She is currently studying concept art and hopes to work in video game design.

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QUOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND



"In Canada we often equate the state with the government. This leads to great confusion since we always expect that when we elect a government it becomes the state for four years until we can, if we wish, elect a totally different management of the state. This confusion is particularly acute to supporters of the New Democratic Party, since they believe that if their party is elected it becomes master of the state ...

The chief function of the Canadian state system, like of all western political democracies, is to protect and enhance the system of private property and private profit. This is achieved in two broad ways: through use of force and coercion, and through inducement, encouragement, subsidy, or what can be more broadly described as welfare. The coercion need not be brutal (but it sometimes is, as in Quebec in October 1970), and the welfare need not be in the form of direct

payment (for example, the stark class bias of the income tax system).

It is a major task of the state elite, both elected and appointed, to continuously persuade the mass of the population that the state is neutral and that the business of government is conducted in the interest of the nation as a whole, when in reality it is always the interests of the owning class which the state serves. This Canadian state is a 'dictatorship' of the owning class, however successful may be the disguise which it wears."

—MANIFESTO OF THE SASKATCHEWAN WAFFLE MOVEMENT 1975

"We tried not to smile, for smiling only encourages men to bore you and waste your time."

—SHEILA HETI

"I actually wish menopause were as widely considered and discussed in terms of gender identity as transitioning is because it's not the same thing but their effects both get compared (rightly) to puberty in terms of the new fluctuating narrative of a person. I think that's what gender is all about. The story you are telling about who you are as opposed to how you are being read and how you endure, manipulate, float, or occupy that conversation. Everyone agrees or disagrees with what I am when I enter the bathroom. I just don't look right. For a lot of reasons. As I was going through menopause I was excruciatingly aware of all my gender choices and they were all out on the table for a while. I took some hormones. Am I taking these as a transperson or as a menopausal person. And looking back at when I was a young I guess heterosexual in my early twenties I was always super aware of my own secret male ... Nobody knows about the long-term effects of putting hormones into your body for ten or twenty or more years. And if I transitioned in my fifties it would be just in time to go bald."

—EILEEN MYLES



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SUSTAINER PROFILE

SCOTT PRICE



Scott Price is a researcher at the Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg. Currently he is doing a major project on UFCW local 832. He also volunteers in the news department at CKUW 95.9 FM, the campus radio station.

Why does oral history interest you?

Oral history interests me because it's history from below and it helps to demonstrate how ordinary people are historical actors.

What's the best thing about living in Winnipeg?

Winnipeg has an astonishing number of great musicians and artists. I think it may have something to do with the isolation. On any given night you can see a band that will blow you away. Winnipeg also has a rich history of radicalism to learn from. Not only the general strike of 1919 but also people like Helen Armstrong, Joe Zuken, and Nick Ternette. And there are a lot of people here keeping that spirit alive. The mix of great art, culture, and radical politics is what keeps me optimistic and sane.

What is your greatest fear?

Falling from high places.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Books, music, and Vietnamese food.

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JOURNALISM WITH LEGS

I thank my English teachers who assigned Orwell, Bradbury, Huxley, and Vonnegut. They prepared me to recognize the quiet stealth of a totalitarian future slipping in under bureaucratic names like Government Operations Centre – the actual title of the Canadian federal agency tasked with watching over protests and taco fundraisers. Even right-wing columnists like Andrew Coyne are getting spooked by all the surveillance and the tightening muzzle on privacy commissioners, electoral officers, public scientists, and academics.

Checks on power have fallen to us as individuals railing away on Facebook and Twitter. But remember, social media carries dissenting remarks on a corporate-owned tide of advertising and state surveillance, mixed with the soma of a thousand and one memes counselling us to remain calm and happy. The messages are individualized and fleeting.

Who holds power to serious account? The truth of the Government Operations Centre was dug out by an enterprising *Ottawa Citizen* journalist, David Pugliese. Good journalism exists, but it needs a leg to stand on. This June, 320 investigative journalists from around the world headed to Winnipeg for a gathering called Holding Power to Account.

To sum up three days of talk: the journalists are worried.

"In the United States, we are poised on the edge of plutocracy," warned Carl Bernstein formerly of the *Washington Post*. Compared to his time uncovering Watergate, he says that "today we have a culture – not just a corrupt president – but a culture of disingenuousness among the powerful." Ah, for the simpler days of a hotel break and enter! Worse, the culture has been internalized. "What you (journalists) do, what you believe in, is being threatened ... by our own organizations," said the CBC's Peter Mansbridge. "It's death by a thousand cuts, and we're bleeding."

It takes time and organizational backup to file information requests, visit communities, hear people's stories, untangle chronologies, and then write truth to power. It's difficult, stick-your-neck-out work. Not something to be taken for granted.

What you are about to read next is written over the objections of *Briarpatch*'s editors, who worry it appears self-serving. As a media scholar, I say balderdash. With disembodied shareholders sucking commercial newsrooms dry and the CBC bleeding, reader-supported publications like *Briarpatch* are increasingly left to carry the journalistic mission alone. It's too important not to talk about. Who else has launched a lawsuit lately to gain information on a uranium deal in a northern village?

There's a saying: the nail that sticks up gets pounded down. *Briarpatch* has been pounded down many times in the past 41 years and has always managed to stick right back up. Non-profit media has inborn flexibility and a level of sustainability nestled

in the hands of community supporters, beyond market dictates. *Briarpatch* is rich in that regard, historically able to weather drastic revenue changes that would kill a corporate-owned outlet. But the road grows tougher.

Look at the Canada periodical fund, established to keep small independents like *Briarpatch* afloat after the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade knocked down Canada's 150-year-old postal subsidy and opened the door to increased U.S. competition. In 2002, \$26.9 million was dispensed for magazine project funding. By 2013 it was a stingy \$963,121 eked out under increased ministerial control. Not surprisingly, *Briarpatch*, at one time receiving about a third of its budget from the program, was no longer on the recipient list. Picking through government memos, I find it heartbreaking to follow *Briarpatch*'s hopeful inquiries about grants they'd been assured were recommended for approval in 2009 and 2011. The back and forth among departmental staff ("We're not sure how to proceed and what we can say to the client") ends with five fatal words from the desk of then heritage minister James Moore: "I do not approve this grant."

Arts organizations, development agencies, book publishers, and women's groups are on the same ropes. Their ads used to regularly occupy the pages of *Briarpatch*. Now, not so much. It's a perfect storm for sinking independent media when we most need it.

In the U.S., private foundations have become growing players in independent media. Canada doesn't share this philanthropic tradition, nor is it the best road to go down. We have a few alternatives though. Quebec's co-operative movement has long supported community broadcasting. There's the Ontario Media Development Corporation. In B.C., the labour-affiliated Working Enterprises fund boosts *The Tyee*'s investigative work. Other provinces, including *Briarpatch*'s home base of Saskatchewan, are hit-and-miss.

Last November, delegates from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour voted to sponsor *Briarpatch* subscriptions for Saskatchewan libraries, then passed a hat for the magazine. People spoke about the need to collectively sustain independent media in difficult times. How can we build on such initiatives? It's time for a serious conversation about supporting public interest journalism in strategic, enduring ways if we want to take back the future from Big Brother. ★



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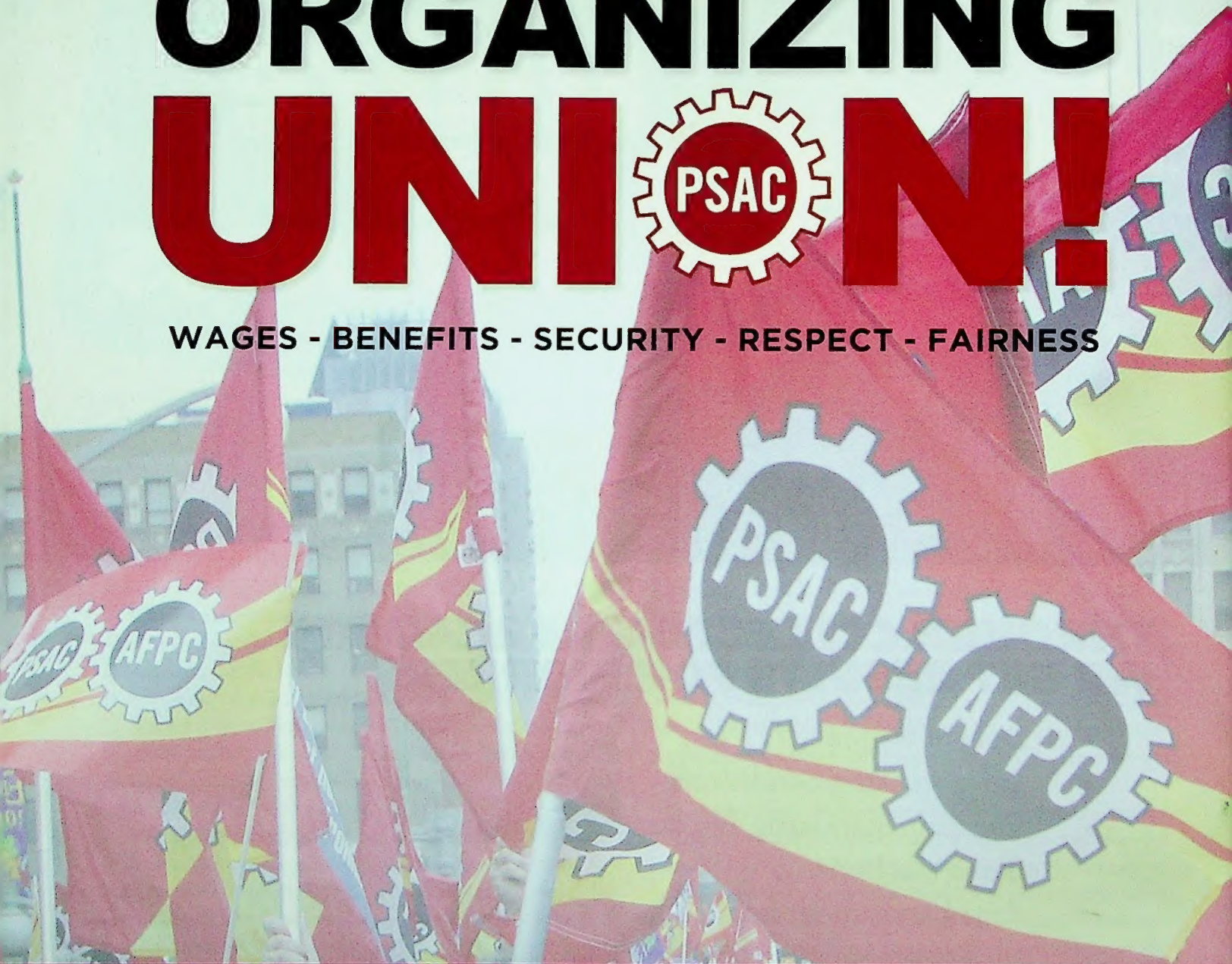
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